

[I'm a Reefer Man]

JUL 6 1939

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Herman Partnow Saul Levitt

ADDRESS 557 W. 144th Street 557 W. 144th Street

DATE June 14, 1939

SUBJECT Maritime Folklore - I'M A REEFER MAN

1. Date and time of interview June 9, 1939
2. Place of interview Bar - Waterfront. 22nd Street & 11th Avenue
3. Name and address of informant Anonymous
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C

TEXT OF INTERVIEW (UNEDITED)

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I didn't catch it at the first - the heavy Southern accent. He must have come from Kentucky, I hardly fouled it, I didn't notice, he slowed down his words, sort of agitated. He said I was soft-jiving him, or robbing him, not hard, but rooking him. Then he lifted up my hair, sort of smiled, too. You know. I said: Cut it out. And he said: Blast that weed. This guy says: I'd like more tea. I was blushing, I didn't like it at all. Some negro passed by with a coupla women, he was real hopped up, he said: You want a pair of Florsheim shoes? Yeah, I said. He said: Go to the Sally. They're giving them away. So I take ny shoes and slash hell out of my shoes. And I go to the Sally. Can I have a pair of shoes? I said. Sure, just help yourself. There were women's high heel shoes, swimming shoes, pumps. He was hopped up, you sea. Crazy. All this time he didn't touch on the subject of dope. Then, on the way back, he began talking. In Rio, on shipboard, a whole mattress full of hay, he was sleeping on it the whole trip, he was high all the time. He told me while he was walking in the street, 2 the curbstone looked like the Grand Canyon, he was sort of disembodied, like a floating ship. Finally, he took an independent attitude and I yessed him a lot, then

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he showed me the stuff in the lining of his coat, in his shirt cuff, in the knot of his tie even and the lining of his coat, I'm a reefer man, he said, grinning, that's what I am - a reefer man.

He was a beachcomber from Porto Rico. He sailed to New York and all the way he didn't even know he was on the trip, he was smoking weed. In fact, he was a super-reefer man. He told me how he used to take the matreess out of its cover, take out all the stuffing out of the pillowcase and load it up with loco-weed, a sort of alfalfa-looking weed with nodules. And he slept on this mattress. Going through the Narrows he was fired. He yelled: give me a work boat, put me off here, you bastards. I'll row back to my native land. Boy, he was a real super-buck, a mackerel-snapper.

While he was talking to me he showed me how he used to do it on board ship. He took out a can of Prince Albert and got a drink of ice water from the bartender and he showed me the stuff - it was hasheesh gum, like chewing tobacco, then he rolled it in a paper and lit it right there, with every ody everybody around. I was only an innocent victim of all this, on board ship, he said, he used to screw up the portholes and plug up the keyholes and smoke that way, until the captain discovered him, that was in the [?] Narrows and he was fired.